



Fact sheet | Halloween



Enjoy Halloween Without Harming Your Teeth

Academy of General Dentistry Advises Promotion of Healthy Habits

Costumes and candy go hand-in-hand when Halloween rolls around, but when kids bring home a bag of sugared goodies, they could be putting their teeth at risk for decay. The Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) recognizes it's unrealistic for parents to prevent children from eating candy and instead encourages parents to take active steps in preventing tooth decay and promoting good nutrition all year long.

Fight Cavities with Healthier Treats

Since sugar-free gum is one treat that actually helps prevent cavities, it is a smart choice to drop in Halloween bags this year. Parents can also give it to their children to help neutralize the effects of sugary snacks after eating.

Chewing sugar-free gum containing the artificial sweeteners sorbitol and xylitol reduces cavities. The chewing motion stimulates the flow of saliva, which helps cleanse the teeth. Sweets are especially harmful, since damaging acids form in the mouth every time you eat a sugary snack, and continue to affect the teeth for at least 20 minutes before they are neutralized. The sweetening agents in sugarless gum are effective in combating the bacteria in plaque and fighting the acid that eats away at enamel.

Certain foods such as sweets and soda are easily linked to tooth decay, however all foods can promote tooth decay if eaten in excess. The key? Teach kids to eat in moderation and make sure that they take proper care of their teeth. "While healthy alternatives to candy such as fruit and nuts are great, these foods are sticky and can get caught in the pits and grooves of teeth causing decay. Reading nutrition labels and being sensible about the foods you and your children eat on a daily basis helps promote good oral and overall health," says Julie Barna, DMD, MAGD.

Add Fluoride to Children's Regimen

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports over the past 50 years, the damage caused by tooth decay has been dramatically reduced primarily through the use of fluoride. Using fluoride can prevent tooth decay two ways; brushing teeth with fluoridated toothpaste and drinking fluoridated water. Children should brush three times a day for two minutes and rinse with a fluoridated mouth rinse. Fluoride treatments, applied directly onto teeth, are also available in any dentist's office. As for fluoridated water, it can be delivered through the water supply. If that is not an option in your area, purchasing fluoridated bottled water can be worth the cost in lowered dental expenses.

